

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 USIE-00 INRE-00 SCS-03
L-03 EB-07 SCA-01 H-01 INR-07 DLOS-06 PRS-01 CG-00
DOTE-00 SS-15 TRSE-00 COME-00 SAL-01 OES-06 NSC-05
PA-01 JUSE-00 /068 W
-----182351Z 086658 /72 64

O R 182258Z JAN 77
FM AMEMBASSY QUITO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 2922
INFO AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL
AMEMBASSY LIMA

C O N F I D E N T I A L QUITO 0402

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EFIS, EC
SUBJECT: ALLEGATION OF FISHING BOAT INCIDENTS

1. SUMMARY: A WIRE SERVICE ARTICLE REPORTED THAT US FISHING BOAT ELUDED ECUADOREAN PATROL IN ECUADOREAN-CLAIMED WATERS ON JAN. 17. THE REPORT IS LIKELY TO BE DETRIMENTAL TO US FISHING INTERESTS IF NOT COUNTERED. ECUADOREAN AUTHORITIES HAVE DENIED THAT ANY INCIDENT TOOK PLACE. EMBASSY WOULD APPRECIATE A CLARIFYING STATEMENT FROM THE US REGARDING ECUADOREAN INVOLVEMENT IN ORDER TO SOOTHE RUFFLED FEELINGS HERE.

2. MORNING DAILIES EL COMERCIO OF QUITO AND EXPRESSION OF GUAYAQUIL GAVE FRONT-PAGE COVERAGE ON JAN. 18 TO AN AFP STORY DATED SAN DIEGO ALLEGING THAT AN AMERICAN FISHING BOAT OPERATING 100 MILES OFF ECUADOREAN COAST ESCAPED FROM AN ECUADOREAN PATROL BOAT SEEKING TO DETAIN IT ON JAN. 17. ACCORDING TO THE ARTICLE, THE OWNER OF THE BOAT WANTED THE STATE DEPARTMENT TO PROTEST TO THE GOE ABOUT THE INCIDENT.

3. THE COMMANDER OF THE FIRST NAVAL ZONE AT GUAYAQUIL HAS VEHEMENTLY DENIED TO AMCONGEN GUAYAQUIL THAT ANY
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ECUADOREAN NAVAL VESSEL WAS INVOLVED IN AN INCIDENT SIMILAR TO THAT REPORTED BY AFP. ALSO, THE DIRECTOR OF NAVAL OPERATIONS IN QUITO PERSONALLY PHONED DEFATT ON THE MORNING OF JAN. 18 ASSURING HIM THAT NO SUCH INCIDENT HAD BEEN REPORTED.

4. WE UNDERSTAND FROM OUR TELEPHONE CONVERSATION WITH

DEPARTMENT TODAY THAT AMERICAN TUNABOAT ASSOCIATION STATES THAT SOURCE OF STORY WAS BRIEF MESSAGE RELAYED BY SECOND US BOAT FROM US TUNABOAT CINDY ANN ON JAN 17 THAT IT HAD BEEN FIRED UPON WHILE A FEW HUNDRED MILES OFF SOUTH AMERICAN COAST. WE UNDERSTAND THAT NATIONALITY OF PATROL BOAT IS SPECULATIVE AND MAY HAVE BEEN DREAMED UP BY AFP CORRESPONDENT. IN VIEW OF OFFICIAL GOE DENIALS, THE ABSENCE OF ANY RECENT PAST HISTORY OF THE ECUADOREAN NAVY FIRING ON FISHING BOATS TO ENFORCE ITS JURISDICTIONAL CLAIM, AND THE UNCERTAIN IDENTIFICATION OF THE PATROL BOAT, WE VENTURE A GUESS THAT THE INCIDENT REPORTED BY THE CINDY ANN PROBABLY DID NOT INVOLVE AN ECUADOREAN PATROL CRAFT.

5. THE ARTICLE, IF NOT COUNTERED, COULD HAVE A PERNICIOUS EFFECT ON BILATERAL EFFORTS TO AVOID PROBLEMS WITH FISHING BOATS JUST AT THE BEGINNING OF THE FISHING SEASON. ECUADOR-EAN AUTHORITIES HAVE GIVEN EVERY INDICATION THAT THEY WILL BEND OVER BACKWARDS TO AVOID INCIDENTS THIS YEAR ON THE PREMIS THAT THE USG AND THE TUNABOATS ARE ALSO DISPOSED TO COOPERATE. SUGGESTIONS IN THE INTERNATIONAL MEDIA THAT AMERICAN BOATS ARE FISHING WITHOUT A LICENSE AND THEN FLAUNTING THAT FACT PUBLICLY WILL BE DIFFICULT FOR REASONS OF FACE FOR THE GOE TO TOLERATE. BECAUSE OF THESE REASONS, THE EMBASSY WOULD WELCOME AS PROMPT A STATEMENT AS POSSIBLE FROM EITHER DEPARTMENT OR AMERICAN TUNABOAT ASSOCIATION GIVING THE LIE TO THE ARTICLE IF POSSIBLE, OR AT LEAST CASTING DOUBT UPON IT BASED ON THE FACTS AT HAND.
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